

Culture • Lifestyle • Faces

SPRING 2014

ISLAND TEMPTATIONS



*Carnaval 60
Diamond Jubilee*
COLLECTOR'S EDITION



*Tees by Bula Surf Shop and Area 297 Kustom Apparel
Trousers and shorts available at TRASH
Jewelry available at Rage Silver*

Aruba's Got a Thing for Tees

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The T-shirt—everyone's got at least one in their wardrobe. Debuting in 1913 as a functional necessity for the United States Navy as an accompanying undergarment for the sailor suit, the “tee” is second to none as the most versatile piece of clothing a century later.

By the 1950s, tees were not just for sailors and farmers plowing fields; all the cool cats were sporting white crews with cigarette packs rolled into the sleeves a la James Dean. The tee's rebellious spirit was embodied in the 1960s and early 1970s by tie-dyed versions in rainbows of psychedelic colors. Tees also became more than a fashion statement; they were sources of propaganda, often emblazoned with political and cultural statements on social issues relevant to those wearing them—do “Give peace a chance” and “Make love not war” sound familiar? And of course, the iconic symbol of the times—the peace sign—was a favorite of the then coming-of-age baby-boomer generation.

With the invasion of rock ‘n’ roll came concert and band tees—a trend that is still popular today. I purge my closet every year, but one item that will NEVER be put in the give-away pile is my black and silver-studded Led Zeppelin tee! And how many of us covet our Rolling Stones tee with the iconic lip and tongue logo?

Today, political statements are still being made on tees as well. In 2008, Barak Obama's presidential campaign poster, illustrated by Shepard Fairey, was reproduced in mass on tees sported across the nation by his supporters, with slogans like “Yes we can” and “Hope” appended.

Here in Aruba, a recent wave of graphic and iconic tees has emerged. These tees have become signature items for local retailers, offering T-shirt collectors a bit of local Aruban culture to add to their wardrobes.

One of Aruba's most oft-proclaimed Papiamentu words is “dushi” (translated literally as “sweet”), and is used to refer to someone as a sweetheart or indicate that something is delicious, great, or wonderful. In a nutshell, dushi is meant to put a positive emphasis on something or someone, and the word is found on many iconic Aruban tees.

Bula Surf Shop's popular slogan—“Dushi Yiu!”—launched a new era of souvenir tees on the Island. The Papiamentu expression (literally translated as “sweet child”) is a slang term in the local surfing community

and refers to something as awesome, gnarly, or “sweet,” summing up Bula's love of surfing and having fun. Surf shop owners Yair and David created the tees in 2003 shortly after the shop first opened. The shirts were originally made for the shop owners' friends in the Aruban surfing community. In a year's time, the iconic tees (and hats and bumper stickers) had taken off outside of the surf community, and tourists began coming into the shop to seek out the merchandise, wanting to take home something authentically Aruban. The owners are blown away by the success of the line, exclaiming, “There are now people around the world wearing our gear!”

The *JCMD Group*, a collaborative effort of several Aruban individuals, has found success with its “Just Call Me DUSHI” slogan tees (available in many island gift shops and airport shops) and the “I'm DUSHI and I Know It” apparel line (available exclusively at La Moderna on Mainstreet). Annoyed by the prevalence of souvenirs made in places like China and Jamaica with the word “Aruba” printed on them or an “Aruba” sticker slapped on them, the group felt there was an opportunity to create something indicative of the Island and its language. Combining English-language pop culture slogans with Aruba's language led to slogans that they feel are a fun and easy way for visitors to become familiar with Papiamentu and take back with them not only a great souvenir, but also something that represents the positive outlook and nature of the local people.

De Palm Tours also started a line of “dushi” shirts in their Coconuts retail shops in early 2013. Retail operations manager Liesje Seraus conceived the line of “Biba Dushi” (meaning “live sweetly”) merchandise while traveling with friends to compete in an international beach tennis tournament. “We were proud to represent Aruba and we also wanted to teach our international beach tennis friends some Papiamentu phrases,” she explains. Coconuts introduced T-shirts first, followed by hats, flip-flops, and even hoodies. The line has a great international following—especially in the Brazilian market.

Retail maven Jodi Tobman of The Salamander Group introduced the “Biba Lekker” line of merchandise in her *T.H. Palm & Company* store in late 2011. “When we were at the table discussing this line, I recalled a conversation I once had with a close friend of mine,

sharing with each other the wisdom of a spiritual concept—we have a shopping cart we wheel through our lives, and when we wake up each day we can choose to fill our cart with negative thoughts, or we can fill it with joy and contentment...and I always loved the expression ‘biba lekker’ (‘life is good’) because it is a descriptive of so many different elements in our daily lives that are positive,” Jodi shares. The line is also available on Mainstreet at *Caribbean Clothing Company*.

Local artists and fashion designers are also making strides in the land of tees. Airbrush artist and custom painter Alberto Arrindell has always dreamed of having his own clothing line, and now his Area 297 Kustom Apparel line of merchandise showcases his arsenal of artistic talents honed over the years detailing bikes, cars, skateboards, and tattoos. His line of shirts, tank tops, and, as he puts it, “random cool stuff...whatever is hip at the moment” is custom designed beginning with sketches by Alberto, which are then transferred into a digital file and fine tuned by a graphic artist. Alberto also does his own printing in-house. Currently, *Area 297 Kustom Apparel* can be purchased at No Limit Street Wear and Basari Aruba. Alberto also does custom airbrush designs on request.

Artist, athlete, and now retailer Ricardo “Cado” de Lannoy opened *Salad Skate Shop* with longtime friend Dennis Schoneveld. The store's line of tees and hats are quickly snatched off shelves, not just by skateboarders but also by locals and tourists who are attracted to the brand's quirky style and humor. Cado was one of the creators of a popular line of local graphic tees, Ducks & Robots, and his unique style can now be found imprinted on the signature line at Salad Skate Shop.

Aruba's premier fashion designer, Ronchie de Cuba, has worked in many fashion genres—from swimwear to evening gowns—and in 2011 began his slogan line of tees, TRASHYTEES, available exclusively at *TRASH by Ronchie*. “I wanted to present a fashionable, comedic twist to T-shirts, with fun and fresh sayings in Papiamentu.” The designer collaborates with Shaitza Oliviera on the graphics and prints the shirts here in Aruba.

So if you are looking to add to your arsenal of tees, you can easily stockpile some Aruban authenticity in just about any size, shape, color, style, and design! Pictured on the following pages are some of our favs. 